



Peer Education Project

Loneliness

Finding our
connections to
feel less lonely

A Guide for Pupils



Contents

What is loneliness?	3
How does loneliness link to our mental health?	5
Finding connections...	8
... with ourselves	8
... with others	11
... with the world around us	15

"If you want to reduce the feelings of loneliness, taking small steps is okay. For example, talk to someone like parents or friends that you trust and are close to. You could go out with them for something small like a tea and coffee or just something nice."

Peer Educator
Peer Education Project

What is loneliness?

Loneliness is when we feel we do not have the meaningful relationships we want around us.

It is something we can all experience from time-to-time, throughout our lives, and will be different for everyone.

Although feeling lonely is often connected with being alone, they do not mean the same thing, or always happen together.

Being alone, sometimes called social isolation, means being physically separated from the people, and things, that bring us comfort and support.

A person who is socially isolated does not necessarily feel lonely.



Watch the [‘What’s up with Merve?’](#) video to think about how loneliness can make someone feel, and what they, and others, can do to help.

Some people may enjoy spending time by themselves, whereas others may feel lonely when spending time alone.

Some people may feel lonely when spending time with others, perhaps feeling like others don't understand or care about them, or that they don't belong or fit in.



Read **Young Mind's** guide on ['What is Mental Health?'](#)

Feelings of loneliness can come and go, depending on the experiences we have.

Many of us feel lonely from time-to-time.

Sometimes we can feel lonely for longer periods of time.

When those feelings stick around, it is important to reach out to someone we trust and ask for help.

If you are worried about yourself or a peer, it is important to talk to a trusted adult.

This could be an adult at school, at home, or another trusted adult in your life.

How does loneliness link to mental health?

Mental health is made up of our thoughts, feelings, mood, and behaviour.

We all have mental health, just like we all have physical health.



Although loneliness is not a mental health problem, it is an experience that can affect our mental health.

When we feel lonely, we may experience low mood and low-self-esteem.

Sometimes, if we are already experiencing poor mental health, and do not feel understood, this can lead to feeling lonely.



Read Young Mind's guide on ['How to cope with loneliness'](#) for advice.

There are many things we can do to look after our mental health and support ourselves when we are feeling lonely.

Sometimes, it can help to find meaningful connections with ourselves, others, and the world around us, to reduce feelings of loneliness.



It is important that, when we are no longer taking part in and enjoying our everyday activities, we talk to someone.



Read our [8 Top Tips for Good Mental Health](#) in our wellbeing week pack.

"When my friend feels lonely I make sure to reassure them and let them know how much their company is appreciated."

**Peer Educator
Peer Education Project**

Finding connections with ourselves

Explore how we feel

During the day, we can all experience different feelings and emotions.

Sometimes, we may find it difficult to understand how we are feeling and why.

It's ok to feel this way.



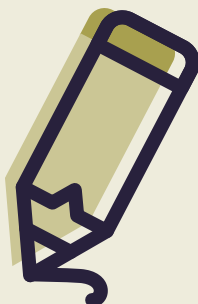
Watch this [short story from Headspace](#) on how to sit with passing thoughts and feelings.

To connect with our feelings, we could try:

- writing down or drawing how we are feeling.
- looking at information on how to spot different feelings.
- listening to music.



Activity - Opposite Actions



When we are feeling lonely, we may find it difficult to connect with people. Instead of sitting with this feeling of loneliness, we could try calling someone to talk to them about it.

Be kind to ourselves

When we feel lonely, we may also experience feelings of guilt or shame. It's ok to feel this way. These feelings are part of the everyday human experience.

Just because we feel a certain way now, it doesn't mean that we will always feel this way.



It is important to show kindness to ourselves, especially when we are not feeling our best.

- Have a favourite treat.
- Dance to a favourite song.
- Play a game with friends.
- Go for a walk outside.

Mindfulness is one way we can show kindness to ourselves. It is the skill of paying attention to what is happening in your mind and body right now, without judgement.

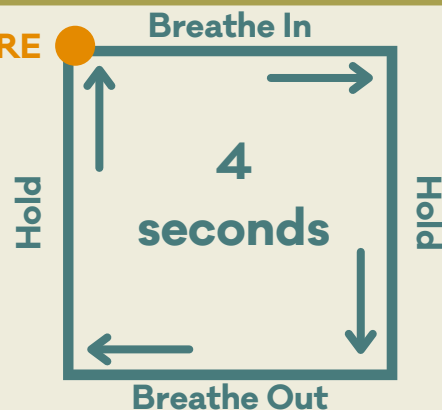
Mindfulness can reduce difficult feelings, including loneliness.



Activity - Mindful Breathing

Follow the square round. Each line is 4 seconds.

START HERE



Find ways of expressing how we feel

Keeping our feelings inside, to ourselves, can sometimes feel like the only option we have. Yet, this can often lead to feeling overwhelmed and uncomfortable.

Finding healthy ways of expressing our thoughts and feelings can help us look after our mental health.

The ways we express ourselves will be different for each of us and may depend on what we are going through.

It may take time, and practice, to find our ways of connecting with our thoughts and feelings.

You could try:



Playing a sport



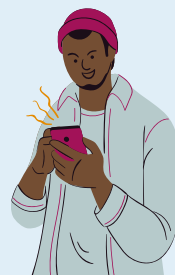
Dancing



Painting



Chatting to someone



Recording voice-memos



Playing a musical instrument

Finding connections with others

Talk to someone

There are many support services we can reach out to if we are feeling lonely, as well as our own support networks, including those we live with, peers and staff at school.

Activity - Constellations of Connection Doodling

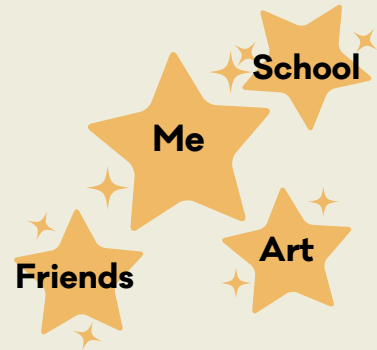
Step 1

Draw a star in the middle of a piece of paper, this star is you.



Step 2

Draw other stars on the page. These other stars represent the people, places or activities you have in your life that you can turn to for support or that help you feel better.



Step 3

Draw lines from your star to these other stars to show your connection.



Even when we are finding things a little more difficult, and perhaps we don't feel like we are shining so brightly, we are still connected to these other stars that are there to help.

People who will listen

The Mix

Whether you want a quick chat or more focused help, the trained team at The Mix will be there to help.

Text THEMIX to 85258

or use one of their other helpline platforms.



Shout

shout
85258

here for you 24/7

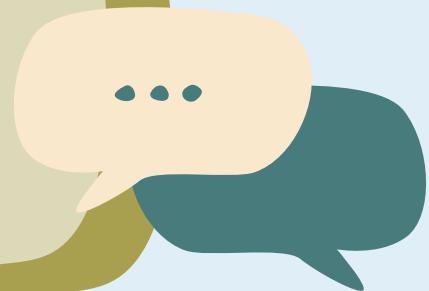
If you are struggling to cope and need to talk, trained Shout Volunteers are here for you, day or night.

Shout 85258 is a free, confidential, anonymous text support service.

Samaritans

Whatever you're going through, you can call Samaritans at any time, from any phone for free. They will listen. They won't judge or tell you what to do.

Call free on 116 123.



Spend time with people we trust

Healthy, supportive relationships are more important for helping with feelings of loneliness than having lots of relationships that do not provide us with support and care.

There are many ways we can spend quality time in our relationships:

- Check in with a friend at lunchtime.
- Do an activity with someone that we both enjoy.
- Cook dinner with someone at home.



Finding people with similar interests that we can relate to will help us to feel more connected.

This can take time, but there will be many opportunities in life to meet new people and build healthy relationships with those who make us feel like we belong.



Check out our [Healthy Relationships Campaign](#).

Find ways to open up

Sometimes it can be difficult to share how we are feeling. It is important to do it in our own time, with someone we trust.

Opening up about how you feel is not a sign of weakness.

It is courageous.

Sharing how you feel with someone may help you feel less lonely.

As loneliness is something that we all experience, chances are that they may have also felt this way at some point too.



[Childline](#) has advice on how to communicate with others when feeling lonely.



Sometimes saying how we're feeling out loud can be challenging.

To take that first step, we could try writing things down in a text or a letter.



[Hub of Hope](#) is a national database that brings together local mental health services, so you can find support close to home.

Finding connections with the world around us

Do things we enjoy

There are many ways we can connect with the world around us, which may help us feel less lonely.



Read our [Connect with Nature](#) guide.

Activity - What matters to us?

A good starting point is thinking about the things that really matter to you in life. These may include:

- spending time with friends and family.
- learning something new about a topic you are interested in.
- spending time in nature.
- following your favourite sports team.
- raising money for charity.

Why not make your own list of things that matter to you?



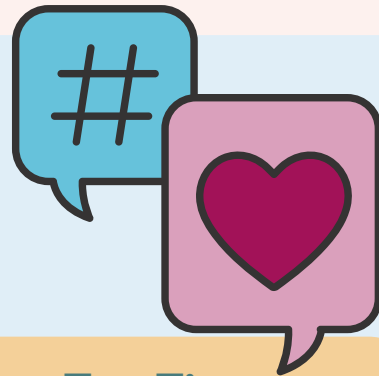
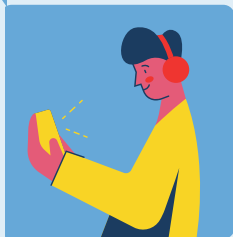
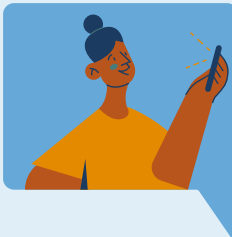
Find people with similar interests to us

Joining a group, whether based on a hobby, faith, or a skill, can help us feel more connected to ourselves and others.

If we think about what we are most interested in and enjoy doing, it might help us find a community that would be the most supportive for us.

Social media can help us feel connected and be a great way to share interests.

However, sometimes social media can make us feel more lonely.



Top Tip

If you find that social media is making you lonely, upset, or other difficult feelings, why not take a break for a little while?

You could unfollow or mute accounts that bring up these difficult feelings and follow accounts that empower you.



Check out the [Anna Freud Centre's guide on managing social media](#).

Show gratitude to ourselves and others

Gratitude means feeling thankful for all the different things and experiences we have in our lives.

This includes small, simple things that we might take for granted everyday, such as someone holding a door open for us or the rain that helps plants grow.

Gratitude also includes being kind to ourselves and others.



Check out our [Kindness Guide](#)

It's not always easy to feel and show gratitude.

Sometimes we can be too busy or stressed to take notice of what we have.

But we can teach ourselves to be more grateful.

Showing gratitude for the things around us can help to make us feel more connected and less lonely.

"Try doing something you enjoy or something that you are good at because it can make you feel confident and comfortable again."

**Peer Educator
Peer Education Project**



Mental Health
Foundation

[mentalhealth.org.uk](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

Facebook: [mentalhealthfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/mentalhealthfoundation)

Twitter: [@mentalhealth](https://twitter.com/mentalhealth)

Instagram: [@mentalhealthfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/mentalhealthfoundation)

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